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# Lack of Commitment? Work Orientations of Finnish Employees in a European Comparison

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## ABSTRACT

*It has been argued that individuals' employment commitment, that is, their commitment to work in general is crucial in today's labor markets where life-long employment relationships are less frequently offered by organizations. In addition, employees' organizational commitment, that is, their commitment to their own organization is also vital for organizations and firms, affecting many areas of importance to them. This article asks how Finnish employees rank in both employment commitment and affective organizational commitment compared with employees in 15 other European countries. The data were collected in 2005–2007 through the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), Work Orientation Module III. The results show Finnish employees scoring below European averages in both types of commitment when employee-level and organization-level factors are taken into account. Employment commitment was highest in Norway and affective organizational commitment highest in Portugal. The perceived intrinsic rewards of the job were the strongest predictor of employment and affective organizational commitment in most of the countries researched, increasing both these types of commitment. However, the perceived social relations between management and employees were found to be the most powerful determinant of affective organizational commitment in Finland, with perceived good relations adding to the affective organizational commitment of employees. The data were analyzed mainly by means of a general linear model procedure.*

## KEY WORDS

*Affective organizational commitment / country comparison / employee / employment commitment / Finland / work orientation*

## Introduction

European countries are currently attempting to increase their employment rates in the face of growing global economic competition, financial and economic crisis, and an aging population (Council of the European Union, 2010; Gallie, 2013). Achieving this goal requires that individuals find a job and then show a strong commitment to labor market and to its organizations. The main question addressed in this article is whether employment and affective organizational commitment of employees in Finland differ from these commitments in other European countries. The topic has not been covered in depth in earlier research. Finland is an interesting case for comparison, as the pace of economic modernization in post-war Finland has been unique, and in a European context quite rapid (Crouch, 2008; Pyöriä, 2006). Thus, whether Finnish employees

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currently diverge from other European countries where economic modernization has largely taken place earlier could reveal important insights into an area in which there have been few studies. Moreover, the current educational level of Finns, measured as 25 to 64-year-old population that has attained tertiary education, is very high by European standards (OECD, 2013). Higher levels of education have usually been related to, for example, stronger employment commitment on an individual level (Esser, 2009).

It has been stated that current organizations increasingly attempt to promote commitment of employees by providing opportunities for employees to develop their skills and have positive work experiences, because organizations today often cannot provide stable career ladders the way they could in the past (Klein et al., 2012; Rubin, 2012). Following from this, some researchers argue that current economic and organizational restructuring have created “boundaryless careers” and new professionally or career-oriented employees at the expense of organizationally oriented ones (Tams & Arthur, 2010). However, others state that organizational commitment is more important than ever. According to the latter view, employees should increasingly demonstrate behaviors consistent with organizational commitment because they are on the front line of many businesses in an increasingly service-based economy (Rubin & Brody, 2005, 2011).

“Work orientation” is used in this article as an umbrella concept that covers different aspects of commitment to work. Different definitions of employment and organizational commitment abound in the literature, as do the means of measuring them. However, when conducting empirical research with survey data, the researcher is bound to make the best use of the available data. “Employment commitment” refers here to employees’ nonfinancial commitment to paid work in a general sense (Esser, 2009; Warr et al., 1979).

Meyer et al. (2012) have identified three distinguishable forms of organizational commitment: affective (AC), normative (NC), and continuance (CC). AC reflects an emotional attachment to and identification with an organization, whereas NC reflects a perceived obligation to remain in the organization. CC denotes the perceived costs associated with leaving the organization. Meyer et al. (2002) have shown that AC is most strongly associated with job performance and organizational citizenship behavior, followed by NC and CC. A similar pattern has been found with regard to employee well-being. High AC may thus improve employee performance and employee well-being, as well as increase altruism in the workplace. “Organizational commitment” is measured in this study on the “Porter scale” (Porter et al., 1974), which comes close to the AC of Meyer et al. (2002, 2012). Given the current data, to be presented later, one cannot capture the remaining two dimensions of organizational commitment by Meyer et al. (*ibid.*).<sup>1</sup>

The article proceeds as follows. First, the determinants of work orientations as shown in previous research are reviewed. Then, the aims, data, and methods are presented. Finally, the research question is answered using the empirical data.

## Accounting for employment and organizational commitment

With a high degree of both employment and organizational commitment usually being a desirable goal in western societies, it is important to know which factors increase or are related to these. It could be expected that factors on many different levels affect

these two types of employee commitment. Demographic variables, variables relating to individual differences, variables relating to the work experiences of individuals, as well as organizational and societal factors may have an effect on employment and organizational commitment. Societal factors can include both cultural and economic factors. (Davoine & Méda, 2009; Hofstede, 2001; Klein et al., 2012; Meyer et al., 2002, Schwartz, 1999.) Here, the effects on employees' work orientations of demographic variables, variables relating to the work experiences of individuals, and organizational factors are examined. What is most important from the viewpoint of the present study is whether the effects of employee-level factors and organization-level factors on employment and affective organizational commitment differ among the countries compared. Particularly interesting is whether Finland differs in this respect. In other words, can the possible country differences in the work orientations of employees be explained by the characteristics of employees and their organizations?

Previous studies of Finnish work orientations in international comparison are rare. Alkula (1990: 87–94) found that paid work was clearly regarded as more central to Finns than to Swedes in the late 1970s in a study in which the respondents rated the importance of different aspects of life, including paid work, leisure activities outside the home, and home life. The results were based on nationally representative surveys collected in the late 1970s.

In a more recent study comparing work orientations of employees in five European countries (Turunen, 2011a), Finnish employees did not display particularly high levels of employment commitment: Finns were next to last in this category. Employment commitment was highest in Sweden, followed by Germany and Great Britain, even when holding employees' age, gender, occupational class, and perceived job insecurity constant. Only Spanish employees showed lower employment commitment than their Finnish counterparts in this comparison. When comparing the same countries, affective organizational commitment was found to be highest in Germany followed by Great Britain. Finland, Spain, and Sweden came next, showing similar levels of affective organizational commitment, even after controlling for the same individual-level variables as in the case of employment commitment.

Meyer et al. (2012) used their three-component model of organizational commitment to compare organizational commitment in 54 countries and nine geographic regions. When comparing the geographic regions, their meta-analytical study showed that affective organizational commitment (AC) was highest in Germanic Europe and lowest in Nordic Europe. Finland showed the lowest AC of the Nordic countries. However, the results of Meyer et al. do not include control variables. Any observed difference between countries could be partly explained by compositional differences between them in occupational structure, for example, or by differences between countries in organization-level factors. By controlling for the effects of available employee-level factors and organization-level factors on employment and affective organizational commitment, it is possible to analyze country differences in employees' work orientations when these differences are taken into account, which will be done in this study.

Previous research has demonstrated that employment and organizational commitment are strongly related to a number of individual and organizational-level characteristics. In recent comparative studies of western societies, based on the Work Orientation Modules of the International Social Survey Program (ISSP), women have been found to be more committed to employment than men (Esser, 2009; Hult & Svallfors, 2002;



Svallfors et al., 2001). However, in recent studies, no gender differences in affective organizational commitment have been noted (Hult, 2005; Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Svallfors et al., 2001).

Using the Work Orientation Module III of the ISSP with data collected in 2005–2006, Esser (2009) looked at employment commitment in 13 mature welfare states<sup>2</sup> and found that employment commitment increases with higher education and social class. Age was a less important factor, although commitment weakened somewhat with age among men. Marital status or the presence of a dependent child was of no relevance to this type of commitment. The importance of peoples' socio-economic characteristics such as their occupation and education to their employment and affective organizational commitment has also been noted in other studies. The higher occupational classes and those with a higher education have usually been found to be more affectively committed to their organization and employment *per se* than have the lower occupational classes and those with less education (Hult, 2005; Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Svallfors et al., 2001).

Studies using data from the Work Orientation Module II of the ISSP collected in 1997 show that aging usually increases affective organizational commitment. However, Felstead's (2010) study based on British data collected in 1992–2006 suggests that such age group differences in organizational commitment may be shrinking (see also White, 2012). White relates this development to within-organization changes that are driving a decline in the organizational commitment of older employees, rather than their disillusionment with the wider labor market, economy, or society. On the basis of previous research, it is also to be expected that whether an employee works in the public or private sector or on a self-employed basis has an effect on her/his work orientations. The self-employed (and higher-level employees) have usually displayed higher employment and affective organizational commitment than lower-level workers (Esser, 2009; Hult, 2005). Esser's study found no difference between private and public sector employees in employment commitment.

Organizational and workplace characteristics as well as perceived work rewards have been viewed in previous research as important predictors of organizational commitment and organizational behavior (Herzberg et al., 1959; Hult, 2005; Kalleberg, 1977; Marsden et al., 1993). It is to be expected that the individual enters an organization or company with certain expectations (in terms of subjective work goals) and, if these are met (in terms of perceived work rewards), the commitment will be high. This undoubtedly is a simplification of a more complicated mechanism. Some subjective work goals could, for example, be molded over time by the work experiences or the work environment itself (Hult, 2005).

Ester et al. (2006) studied the development of the subjective work goals of individuals over time in 12 Western European countries and the USA with the help of World Values Surveys carried out in 1981, 1990, and 2000. They found that support for both intrinsic and extrinsic work goals increased over time when analyzing all countries examined as a whole. However, support for intrinsic work goals increased more than support for extrinsic work goals. Intrinsic work goals referred, for example, to a responsible job and to a job that is interesting while extrinsic work goals referred to good pay and a secure job, for example. In a similar vein, perceived work rewards can be classified as either intrinsic or extrinsic. Other subjective work rewards can also exist, for example, those of a societal nature (Hult, 2005).

Research concerning British employees from 1992 and 2006 also suggests that support for intrinsic work goals has grown (Gallie et al., 2012; see also Rubin & Brody, 2011). In addition to this, employees attached more importance to the social climate in the workplace and to the opportunities for work-life balance in 2006 than in 1992. However, support for extrinsic work goals did not increase among British employees in that period (Gallie et al., 2012). Hult (2005) compared affective organizational commitment in six western countries and found that the most important factor for stronger affective organizational commitment in all of them was a job that the employee could find *interesting*. Perceived extrinsic and societal work rewards and seeing one's work as carrying a degree of independence were also related to higher affective organizational commitment, but to a lesser extent. However, earlier studies comparing the effects of perceived work rewards on employment commitment in different countries are rare.

Hodson (2002, p. 65) uses the term "management citizenship behavior" (MCB) to refer to [manager's] "behavior that conforms to prevailing norms for organizational leadership and for respecting workers' rights." Rubin & Brody (2011) expanded the concept of MCB to also include managers' ethical behaviors and behavior vis-a-vis the work-family balance. Rubin & Brody's (2011) empirical results, based on nationally representative data from the USA, showed strong positive effects of MCB on employees' affective organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and mental health. Organizational culture, organizational climate, and human resource (HR) practices may also affect employee commitment (Klein et al., 2012; Pfeffer, 2006).

However, of the different organizational factors, it is only possible, with current data, to analyze the effects of perceived social relationships in the workplace on employees' work orientations. Hult (2005) found that perceived good social relations between management and employees increased the affective organizational commitment of employees. In the same study, no relationship between employees' social relations with each other and affective organizational commitment was observed.

## Aims, data, and methods

The main research question of the study is the following: How do Finnish employees rank in employment and affective organizational commitment compared with other European countries? The data are from the ISSP, Work Orientation Module III. The data are a multistage stratified random sample obtained mostly from the adult population (aged >18 years) in the countries researched. The ISSP is also an attempt to create a comparative data set with which to analyze attitudes comparatively. All ISSP countries have taken part in designing the questionnaires. Consequently, the problem of establishing the cross-national validity of the concepts is not insurmountable (International Social Survey Programme, 2013; Scholz et al., 2008).

In what follows, employment and affective organizational commitment in Finland is compared with that of countries representing different parts of Europe: Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, France, Germany, Great Britain, Hungary, Ireland, Latvia, Norway, Portugal, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland. The data were gathered in most of the research countries in 2005 with the exception of Germany, Denmark, and Ireland, where they were collected in 2006. The data were collected in Portugal in 2006–2007 (Scholz et al., 2008). Therefore, the data were gathered before the current global financial



and economic crisis. However, according to Klein et al. (2012), economic factors of this kind are potentially relevant to instrumental bonds in the workplace but not to commitment bonds.

In most of the countries, the data were collected in face-to-face interviews. However, in Germany and Great Britain, part of the ISSP questionnaires was also administered in a self-completion format. In Finland, France, Norway, and Sweden, the data were collected with a mailed-in survey. In Denmark, most of the data were collected with a mailed-in survey, but some 20% of the interviews were completed by telephone. Response rates were typically around 57%, ranging from very low 17% in France to very high 77% in Cyprus (Scholz et al., 2008). The ISSP data are cross-sectional, and this places sharp limits on causal arguments. The results below pertain to the 18 to 64-year-old salaried respondents working either full-time or part-time.

The dependent variables were created in the following way. A principal component analysis was applied to five propositions (see below) measuring employment and affective organizational commitment in previous studies using ISSP data. A principal component analysis is perhaps the most common form of factor analysis. The purpose of these analysis techniques is to examine whether, on the basis of respondents' answers to, for example, survey questions, we can identify a smaller number of more general factors or principal components that underlie answers to individual questions (de Vaus, 2002). At first, the principal component analysis was repeated for 17 European countries separately. The analysis produced two principal components with eigenvalues greater than one in each country except the Czech Republic.<sup>3</sup> In these analyses, employment commitment was clearly distinct from affective organizational commitment in all countries but the Czech Republic. Thus, the Czech Republic was excluded from further analyses.<sup>4</sup>

On this basis, it was decided to build two summated indices, which are used as dependent variables. Each respondent's score on both indices varies from one to five, as did the original variables. A higher score indicates stronger commitment and a lower score a weaker commitment. All of the original answering options constituted a five-point agreement scale (from 1 = strongly agree to 5 = strongly disagree).

Employment commitment was measured using the following propositions:

1. "A job is just a way of earning money – no more."
2. "I would enjoy having a paid job even if I did not need the money." (reversed scoring)

The first item asks whether the respondent finds qualities or values in a job other than the monetary reward it provides. The second item asks whether the respondent finds values in a paid job given the hypothetical situation of being independent of a salary. On the whole, employment commitment thus refers to the degree to which a person wants to be engaged in paid employment and, more specifically, the extent to which this applies regardless of financial need. For brevity, I use the term "employment commitment" to indicate such nonfinancial employment commitment. Those respondents scoring high on this variable can be seen as having strong nonfinancial commitment to work. Low scores on this variable can be seen to reflect extrinsic or instrumental work orientation, as work is being done because of goals "outside" of it, meaning, for example, the pay received for doing it (Esser, 2009; Hult & Edlund, 2008; Turunen, 2011b; Warr et al., 1979.) Employment commitment has been measured with similar variables in several earlier studies (Esser, 2009; Hult, 2008; Hult & Edlund, 2008; Hult & Svalfors, 2002).



Affective organizational commitment was measured here by the responses to the following three statements:

3. "I would turn down another job that offered quite a bit more pay in order to stay with this organization." (reversed scoring)
4. "I am proud to be working for my firm or organization." (reversed scoring)
5. "I am willing to work harder than I have to in order to help the firm or organization I work for succeed." (reversed scoring)

This variable reflecting employees' affective organizational commitment is, as already noted, also called the "Porter scale" (Porter et al., 1974) and comes very close to the affective organizational commitment (AC) of Meyer et al. (2002, 2012). This variable has been used, with slight modifications, in several previous studies (e.g., Felstead, 2010; Hult, 2005).

The dependent variables were examined according the following independent variables: gender, age, occupational class, sector, extrinsic rewards of the job, intrinsic rewards of the job, and perceived social relations (a) between management and employees and (b) between colleagues. The first six of the eight variables represent employee-level variables and the last two represent organization-level variables.<sup>5</sup>

Employees' age was recoded into three classes to capture possible age differences in commitment. Employees' occupations have been classified in the data according to the International Standard Classification of Occupations (ISCO) 1988. The variable reflects the skill level and education required for an employee's current job, and was divided into three classes as follows: Skilled agricultural and fishery workers, craft and related-trade workers, plant and machine operators as well as assemblers and elementary occupations were included in the lowest occupational class. A small number of soldiers was excluded from the analysis. Technicians and associated professionals, clerks, and service workers were included in the middle occupational class. The highest occupational class consists of legislators, senior officials, managers, and professionals. The required skill level and education increases when moving upward from the lowest class (see Statistics Finland, 2001). The variable measuring sector distinguishes between private sector employees, public sector employees, and persons working on a self-employed basis. Unfortunately, the respondents' education could not explicitly be controlled for because there were no data for this from all of the 16 countries. Type of work contract was also not included in the data set, for example, unlimited or limited employment contract.

To study the effects of perceived work rewards on commitments, a principal component analysis was applied to the reported importance of employees' different subjective work goals.<sup>6</sup> The analysis of all countries combined yielded two dimensions of work goals: (a) interesting and independent work, which may be called "intrinsic work goals" and (b) job security, high income, and good opportunities for advancement, which may be called "extrinsic work goals." The data also included questions asking the employees to what extent they perceived these same goals as being offered by their work. Consequently, two summated indices were created: perceived *intrinsic* rewards of the job and perceived *extrinsic* rewards of the job. Both variables were classified in such a fashion that employees having (a) high and (b) medium/low number of either work rewards could be distinguished.





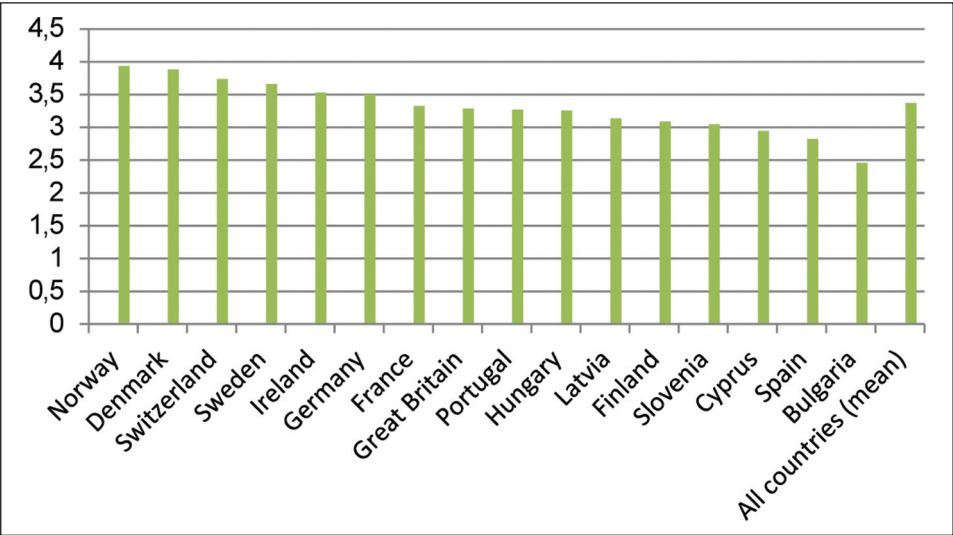
The original answering options concerning perceived social relations between (a) management and employees and (b) perceived social relations between colleagues varied between 1 and 5, from very good to very bad. In cases of both variables, those scoring 1 to 2 were classified as describing “good” relationships and those scoring 3 to 5 were classified as describing “bad” relationships.

As already mentioned, country-level factors as determinants of employees’ work orientation are not discussed in this article. Furthermore, introducing country-level variables might be problematic from statistical point of view, with data from only 16 countries. Some researchers suggest that for multilevel regression models, the higher-level sample size (here: country) should be at least 20, preferably more (Garson, 2011a; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2007, 781–857). Instead of multilevel regression analysis, the data were analyzed mainly by means of a general linear model procedure. By using this procedure, one can conduct both a regression analysis and an analysis of variance (Garson, 2011b).

Work orientations of Finnish employees in a European comparison

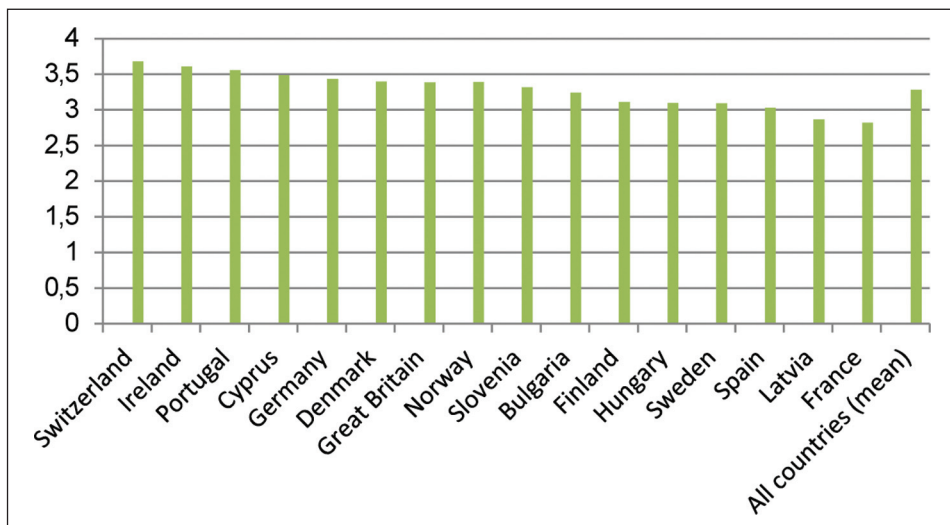
According to the data, Finnish employees did not emerge with particularly high levels of employment commitment by European comparison (Fig. 1; Model 1 of Tab. 3). Only employees from Slovenia, Cyprus, Spain, and Bulgaria showed lower employment commitment than Finnish employees. However, the difference was not statistically significant between Finnish and Slovenian employees. In other words, the Finnish employees scored below European mean values in this comparison. Employment commitment was highest in Norway, Denmark, and Switzerland.

Figure 1: Employment commitment in 16 European countries in 2005–2007 (means).



Data source: ISSP Work Orientations III 2005 to 2007.

**Figure 2:** Affective organizational commitment (AC) in 16 European countries in 2005 to 2007 (means).



Data source: ISSP Work Orientations III 2005 to 2007.

Finnish employees also scored below European mean values in affective organizational commitment (Fig. 2; Model 3 of Tab. 3). Affective organizational commitment was highest in Switzerland, Ireland, and Portugal, and lowest in Spain, Latvia, and France. These figures do not include control variables.

The next step was to determine whether Finland's position in employment and affective organizational commitment would remain the same when controlling for available individual and organization-level factors. Relating to this, attention was first focused on whether Finland differed from the other countries when examining the determinants of work orientations (Tabs. 1, 2). Table 3 shows the country effects on the dependent variables before and after adjusting for these control variables. The data were analyzed by means of a general linear model procedure. Relationships were identified in terms of parameter estimates ( $\beta$ ). The explanatory power of the control variables was measured by the F-value. Here, the effects of control variables were simultaneously taken into account.

In most of the countries compared, women showed stronger employment commitment than men, which supports earlier findings (Esser, 2009; Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Svallfors et al., 2001). The relationship was statistically significant in seven of the 16 countries in this study, including Finland (Tab. 1). On the contrary, the effect of gender on affective organizational commitment was negligible (Tab. 2). There were virtually no age group differences in the dependent variables, except in Slovenia (and to a lesser extent Switzerland), where the youngest age group displayed weaker affective organizational commitment than the oldest. This result regarding negligible age group differences in organizational commitment supports earlier findings concerning British employees (Felstead, 2010; White, 2012).



**Table 1** Determinants of employment commitment (parameter estimates ( $\beta$ ) and F-values from a General Linear Model).

	Finland	Bulgaria	Cyprus	Denmark	France	Germany	Great Britain	Hungary	Ireland	Latvia	Norway	Portugal	Slovenia	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland
Gender (F)	9.29**	2.62	0.17	1.17	22.49***	6.70**	1.44	2.47	0.05	8.11**	3.13	14.43***	5.91*	1.29	3.25	4.71*
Male	-0.29**	-0.19	-0.03	-0.09	-0.37***	-0.21***	-0.12	-0.17	-0.02	-0.26**	-0.11	-0.25***	-0.22*	0.10	-0.12	-0.13*
Female (ref.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Occupational class (F)	21.65***	2.90	4.56*	8.52***	19.48***	8.84***	12.44***	8.28***	8.39***	3.72*	17.58***	11.26***	8.40***	7.26***	20.49***	8.95***
High	0.75***	0.11	0.33*	0.44***	0.63***	0.49***	0.65***	0.52***	0.53***	0.32**	0.50***	0.48***	0.50***	0.20	0.60***	0.36***
Middle	0.49***	-0.20	0.04	0.27**	0.15	0.13	0.49***	0.33**	0.33**	0.10	0.31***	0.17*	0.20	0.37***	0.37***	0.18*
Low (ref.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sector (F)	0.85	1.12	1.42	0.77	0.79	2.64	2.21	3.95*	3.81*	1.04	0.15	1.67	na	0.52	3.08*	1.60
Public sector	-0.23	-0.03	0.25	-0.12	-0.24	0.30*	-0.23	-0.03	-0.23	0.30	0.06	0.17	na	-0.08	-0.21	-0.01
Private sector	-0.21	-0.20	0.14	-0.03	-0.20	0.15	-0.34	-0.32	-0.43*	0.25	0.05	0.05	na	-0.14	-0.05	-0.12
Self-employed (ref.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	na	0.00	0.00	0.00
Extrinsic rewards (F)	1.03	1.52	13.28***	2.35	1.91	1.88	1.67	0.27	0.03	1.87	1.68	8.99**	0.78	0.69	4.36*	3.03
High	0.13	-0.21	0.39***	0.13	0.18	0.13	0.18	0.08	0.02	0.20	0.15	0.28**	0.09	0.09	0.21*	0.14
Medium & low (ref.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Intrinsic rewards (F)	44.53***	9.08**	8.16**	29.23***	23.47***	13.29***	17.55***	13.24***	23.13***	12.00***	15.05***	18.60***	0.13	6.87**	45.49***	20.09***
High	0.62***	0.35**	0.27**	0.62***	0.37***	0.31***	0.44***	0.37***	0.49***	0.31***	0.27***	0.30***	0.03	0.24**	0.47***	0.39***
Medium & low (ref.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Perceived social relation: management/employees (F)	7.83**	0.00	0.38	10.58**	2.50	0.00	0.70	0.12	0.00	1.62	7.65**	0.61	0.97	3.66	0.27	0.35
Good	0.29*	0.01	-0.09	0.28**	0.12	0.01	0.10	0.04	-0.01	0.12	0.18**	0.08	0.09	0.20	0.04	0.05
Bad (ref.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
R <sup>2</sup>	0.25	0.07	0.14	0.11	0.13	0.10	0.17	0.17	0.13	0.09	0.12	0.12	0.09	0.08	0.17	0.10
N	522	375	509	841	941	672	405	397	472	566	752	923	430	505	701	625

**Note:** Models are also controlling for respondents' age and perceived social relation: employees vs. employees.  
Statistical significance: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001; n.a.=not asked.

Occupational class played a role as an explanatory variable in employment commitment in most of the countries, excluding Bulgaria. In all other countries, at least the highest occupational class displayed stronger employment commitment than the lowest, excluding Spain. This finding is in line with earlier studies (Esser, 2009; Hult, 2005; Hult & Svallfors, 2002; Svallfors et al., 2001). The effect of occupational class on employment commitment was strongest in Finland. On the contrary, the relationship between occupational class and affective organizational commitment was rather weak. The sector differences were more pronounced in affective organizational commitment than in employment commitment, where they were almost negligible. Persons working on a self-employed basis showed stronger affective organizational commitment than public and private-sector employees in all countries.

The effect of perceived extrinsic work rewards on affective organizational commitment was strong in all countries, including Finland. A high number of extrinsic work rewards raised the affective organizational commitment of employees. A statistically significant relationship was found between perceived extrinsic rewards of the job and employment commitment only in Cyprus, Portugal, and Sweden. A high number of extrinsic work rewards raised the employment commitment of employees in these countries, but the effect was rather weak.

The relationship between perceived intrinsic rewards of the job and employment commitment was rather strong in all countries, excluding Slovenia. In other words, employees reporting having a high number of intrinsic work rewards displayed stronger employment commitment than those reporting having a lower number, when controlling for other factors. The effect of perceived intrinsic rewards of the job on affective organizational commitment was even stronger. A high number of intrinsic rewards of the job increased the affective organizational commitment of employees in all countries. This finding is in line with earlier research (Hult, 2005).

Perceived good relations between management and employees increased the affective organizational commitment of employees in all countries. However, perceived good relationships between management and workers increased the employment commitment of employees only in Finland, Denmark, and Norway. The effect of perceived good social relations among employees was rather weak in these types of commitments.

On the whole, the rate of variance was better explained in the case of affective organizational commitment than in the case of employment commitment. Employment commitment was accounted for best in Finland. By examining the F-values, it could be detected that perceived intrinsic rewards of the job were the strongest predictor of employment commitment in most countries, including Finland. Perceived intrinsic rewards of the job were also the strongest determinant of affective organizational commitment in most countries. However, in six of the 16 countries, including Finland, perceived good social relations between management and employees were the most powerful determinant of affective organizational commitment.

Finnish employees scored below European mean values in employment commitment also after controlling for employee-level and organization-level factors (Tab. 3). This was not surprising, as the effects of the control variables on employment commitment were mostly similar in all countries. There were, however, some exceptions. After accounting for the control variables, the difference between Finland, Cyprus, and Spain in employment commitment was no longer statistically significant. When introducing control variables one by one to the model, the statistical difference between Finland and



**Table II** Determinants of affective organizational commitment (parameter estimates ( $\beta$ ) and F-values from a General Linear Model).

	Finland	Bulgaria	Cyprus	Denmark	France	Germany	Great Britain	Hungary	Ireland	Latvia	Norway	Portugal	Slovenia	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland
Age (F)	2.98	2.82	1.02	0.10	1.02	0.50	0.69	0.28	1.00	2.23	0.43	1.14	11.22***	0.18	1.25	4.73**
18-34 yrs.	-0.08	-0.19	-0.10	0.00	0.07	0.02	-0.08	-0.07	-0.12	-0.19*	-0.05	-0.07	-0.43***	-0.02	-0.09	-0.17*
35-49 yrs.	-0.18*	0.06	-0.04	-0.02	0.09	-0.04	-0.09	-0.05	-0.09	-0.09	-0.04	0.02	-0.09	-0.06	0.01	0.03
50-64 yrs. (ref)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Occupational class (F)	0.23	1.61	0.12	0.15	2.70	0.85	2.40	4.64*	0.37	1.37	4.68**	3.52*	0.44	0.86	0.59	2.65
High	0.04	0.22	0.03	-0.03	0.15	-0.01	0.09	0.28**	0.08	0.11	0.17*	0.02	0.09	0.15	0.08	0.13
Middle	0.06	0.14	-0.01	0.00	0.02	0.08	0.20*	0.01	0.04	0.13	0.03	0.14*	0.07	0.07	0.05	-0.02
Low (ref)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Sector (F)	11.69***	8.96***	15.31***	25.44***	12.60***	4.40*	2.07	10.52***	14.69***	19.27***	12.69***	10.77***	n.a	6.01**	18.22***	12.76***
Public sector	-0.69***	-0.54**	-0.06	-0.91***	-0.68***	-0.37**	-0.26*	-0.39*	-0.61***	-0.60***	-0.47***	-0.40***	n.a	-0.48**	-0.57***	-0.55***
Private sector	-0.57***	-0.79***	-0.36***	-0.74***	-0.68***	-0.27*	-0.17	-0.62***	-0.67***	-0.89***	-0.39***	-0.36***	n.a	-0.42**	-0.33**	-0.41***
Self-employed (ref)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	n.a	0.00	0.00	0.00
Extrinsic rewards (F)	22.52***	6.15*	13.69***	34.19***	21.10***	15.83***	10.84**	7.57**	19.24***	6.95**	6.69**	20.76***	29.66***	4.69*	16.80***	12.32***
High	0.50***	0.34*	0.27***	0.41***	0.41***	0.32***	0.33**	0.34**	0.34***	0.31**	0.25**	0.32***	0.49***	0.21*	0.34***	0.26***
Medium & low (ref.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Intrinsic rewards (F)	29.25***	8.07**	35.51***	59.12***	46.23***	40.31***	28.37***	29.85***	45.35***	57.35***	62.78***	61.80***	6.18*	28.03***	81.66***	42.42***
High	0.39***	0.27**	0.38***	0.70***	0.37***	0.46***	0.40***	0.43***	0.48***	0.55***	0.45***	0.41***	0.21*	0.43***	0.51***	0.52***

to be continued

Medium & low (ref.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Perceived social relation: management/employees (F)	49.26****	18.48****	25.80****	75.84****	79.21****	20.53****	18.88****	30.66****	36.03****	59.64****	55.86****	28.62****	23.06****	20.47****	26.98****	19.44****			
Good	0.56****	0.54****	0.49****	0.59****	0.47****	0.42****	0.36****	0.49****	0.58****	0.59****	0.40****	0.39****	0.39****	0.41****	0.30****	0.35****			
Bad (ref.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00			
Perceived social relation: employee/employee (F)	0.25	0.04	2.76	4.59*	0.24	1.09	0.34	1.12	0.09	0.26	6.98**	2.33	0.02	3.85	1.06	10.96***			
Good	-0.05	-0.02	0.16	0.19*	-0.03	0.13	0.07	0.12	-0.05	-0.05	0.24**	0.13	0.01	-0.21	0.08	0.39****			
Bad (ref.)	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00			
R <sup>2</sup>	0.30	0.23	0.46	0.31	0.23	0.16	0.22	0.33	0.31	0.34	0.28	0.23	0.24	0.19	0.28	0.24			
N	520	376	508	839	937	665	405	396	471	562	754	925	428	504	703	625			

**Note:** Models are also controlling for respondents' gender:

Statistical significance: \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; n.a.=not asked.



Spain disappeared after adding perceived intrinsic rewards of the job to the model (not shown here).<sup>7</sup> The explanation for this lies in the fact that a high number of intrinsic work rewards raised employment commitment in most countries, with Finnish employees having more rewards than Spanish employees. The statistical difference between Finland and Cyprus remained after the control variables were introduced (gender, age group, and extrinsic work rewards), but disappeared when taking account of the rest of the variables. The slight difference between Finland and Latvia in employment commitment evident in Model 1 became statistically significant after controlling for intrinsic rewards of one’s work.

Finnish employees also scored below the European average in affective organizational commitment after adjusting for the control variables (Tab. 3). Only some changes are evident, when comparing Model 3 with Model 4 (Tab. 3). The statistical difference between Finland and Latvia in affective organizational commitment disappeared after introducing perceived intrinsic rewards of the job to the model. The explanation is the

**Table III** Country Effects on Employment and Affective Organizational Commitment [parameter estimates (β) and F-values from a General Linear Model]

Employment Commitment	Model 1 (no controls)	Model 2 (with controls)	Affective organizational commitment	Model 3 (no controls)	Model 4 (with controls)
Country (F)	107.21***	64.22***	Country (F)	69.26***	43.46***
Bulgaria	-0.63***	-0.50***	Bulgaria	0.13*	0.25***
Cyprus	-0.14*	0.01	Cyprus	0.38***	0.42***
Denmark	0.80***	0.74***	Denmark	0.29***	0.17***
France	0.24***	0.26***	France	-0.29***	-0.16***
Germany	0.42***	0.40***	Germany	0.33***	0.21***
Great Britain	0.20**	0.17**	Great Britain	0.28***	0.27***
Hungary	0.17**	0.25***	Hungary	-0.01	0.12*
Ireland	0.44***	0.39***	Ireland	0.51***	0.40***
Latvia	0.06	0.23***	Latvia	-0.24***	-0.01
Norway	0.85***	0.80***	Norway	0.28***	0.26***
Portugal	0.18***	0.28***	Portugal	0.46***	0.48***
Slovenia	-0.04	0.02	Slovenia	0.21***	0.26***
Spain	-0.26***	-0.07	Spain	-0.08	0.06
Sweden	0.57***	0.58***	Sweden	-0.02	0.00
Switzerland	0.65***	0.58***	Switzerland	0.57***	0.43***
Finland (ref.)	0.00	0.00	Finland (ref.)	0.00	0.00
R <sup>2</sup>	0.13	0.22	R <sup>2</sup>	0.09	0.31
N	11024	9634	N	10918	9616

**Note:** Model 2 and Model 4 are controlling for gender, age, occupational class, extrinsic rewards of the job, intrinsic rewards of the job, sector, perceived social relation: management vs. employees, perceived social relation: employees vs. employees. Statistical significance: \*p<0.05, \*\*p<0.01, \*\*\*p<0.001.



same as earlier. A high number of intrinsic work rewards raised affective organizational commitment, these rewards being more common among Finnish than among Latvian employees. In addition to this, the difference between Finland and Hungary in affective organizational commitment became statistically significant after adding perceived intrinsic rewards of the job to the model.

## Conclusion and discussion

The present study asked how Finnish employees rank in employment and affective organizational commitment compared with those in 15 other European countries. It was found that Finnish employees scored below the European averages in both types of commitment when controlling for employee-level and organization-level factors. The finding of relatively low employment commitment among Finnish employees is noteworthy from the viewpoint of European and Finnish labor market policy, if we are to pursue the goal of higher employment rates, which requires high employment commitment from employees. It can also be argued that employment commitment is particularly important in today's labor markets where life-long employment relationships are not often offered by organizations. Having stronger employment commitment could then facilitate the activities of career-oriented employees, such as life-long learning to improve their further employability.

Future research could investigate whether Finnish employees experience organizational commitment differently than employees in other countries. It could be the case, following the concepts of Meyer et al. (2002, 2012), that normative commitment (NC) and/or continuance commitment (CC) better capture the organizational commitment of "average" Finnish employees than affective commitment does. The results of this study, however, are not surprising, when compared with other recent studies. In a meta-analytical study by Meyer et al. (2012), affective organizational commitment was found to be lowest in Nordic Europe, with Finland scoring the lowest AC of the Nordic countries. As mentioned above, the results of Meyer et al. (2012) do not include control variables. A recent study by Stam et al. (2013) examined cross-national variation in work ethics in 44 European countries with the help of the European Values Study conducted in 2008. They understood the notion of strong work ethic as a secular conviction that people have a moral duty to work. The Netherlands, Finland, and Sweden, respectively, scored lowest on this work ethic scale. Work ethic was highest in Turkey, Bulgaria, and Cyprus, respectively. Further country comparisons were not made in this study either.

The results also showed, following Hult (2005), that employees' true loyalty and commitment cannot simply be bought or negotiated. Perceived intrinsic rewards of the job were the strongest predictor of employment and affective organizational commitment for most of the countries researched, boosting these types of commitment. The effect of perceived extrinsic rewards of the job on affective organizational commitment was also strong in all countries. However, perceived good social relations between management and employees were the most powerful determinant of affective organizational commitment in Finland and in some other countries as well. Perceived good relations between management and employees increased the affective organizational commitment of employees. Investing in fostering these relations in Finland, among other things, would benefit Finnish organizations in the form of increased employee commitment.



It can be concluded that low employment and affective organizational commitment of Finnish employees – as initially shown in Figs. 1 and 2 – cannot be explained away by employee-level and organization-level factors. According to previous research, it is also to be expected that most of the unexplained variance in these types of commitment of employees specifically lies at this individual level (Esser, 2009; Stam, et al. 2013). Still, future research is warranted that examines, in addition to employee-level and organization-level factors, the effects of country-level factors, such as the cultural and institutional, on the work orientation of employees. For example, an earlier cited study by Stam et al. (2013) examined the extent to which three dimensions of modernization – economic security, cognitive autonomy, and social complexity – and three types of social institutions – religious heritage, welfare state generosity, and communist past – have an effect on work ethic in Europe. Their results suggested that social institutional theory has more explanatory power than modernization theory. Religious heritage by its own accounted for half of the between-country variation in Europe. Country-level factors, and their impact on the work orientation of employees, is definitely something that my future research on this subject will turn to.

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## End notes

- <sup>1</sup> Instead of the umbrella concept of work orientation, one could also use the concept of "work commitment" when discussing different aspects of commitment to work. Morrow (1993) distinguishes five forms of "work commitment": work ethic endorsement, career commitment, job involvement, continuance organizational commitment and affective organizational commitment. Morrow's work ethic endorsement comes close to my understanding of employment commitment, whereas her affective organizational commitment parallels my understanding of organizational commitment.
- <sup>2</sup> The countries included in Esser's study are Australia, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland, Japan, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the USA.
- <sup>3</sup> The eigenvalue indicates the amount of variance in the pool of original variables that the principal component explains. The higher this value, the more variance the principal

component accounts for. By rule of thumb, principal components should have an eigenvalue greater than one to pass a test (de Vaus, 2002.).

<sup>4</sup> The PASW runs are available from the author upon request.

<sup>5</sup> It should be taken into account that the demarcation line between employee-level and organization-level variables is here a blurred one. In other words, all eight independent variables were based on individual responses.

<sup>6</sup> The PASW runs are available from the author upon request.

<sup>7</sup> The control variables were introduced to the model in an order similar to that presented in Tab. 3.